

CLAIMS

1. A dispenser for holding a means for dispensing units,

- the holding means comprising a plurality of units to be dispensed from a predetermined surface thereof,
- 5 - the dispenser comprising:
 - o an opening for receiving the holding means,
 - o means for preventing access to the units from the predetermined surface, when the holding means is received by the dispenser,
 - 10 o means for engaging the holding means, when the holding means is received by the dispenser, and
 - o means for releasing the engaging means,

wherein:

- the dispenser further comprises means for maintaining the first surface at or in a predetermined plane, when the holding means is received by the dispenser,
- 15 - the engaging means comprises means for abutting an edge portion, of the holding means, facing the opening, when the holding means is received in the opening, the abutting means having an abutting surface facing the edge portion of the holding means, extending at an angle to the predetermined plane, and a predetermined distance away from the plane, and
- 20 - the releasing means comprises means for displacing the edge portion of the holding means at least the predetermined distance away from the plane.

2. A dispenser according to claim 1, wherein the maintaining means is adapted to bias the holding means against one or more surface parts of the dispenser, the surface part(s) defining the predetermined plane.

3. A dispenser according to claim 2, wherein the abutting edge portion extends the predetermined distance away from the surface part(s).

4. A dispenser according to claim 2 or 3, wherein the displacing means is adapted to displace the edge portion at least the predetermined distance away from the surface part(s).

5. A dispenser according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the displacing means is positioned in a part of the dispenser also defining the surface part(s), the displacing means being adapted to displace the edge portion in a direction at an angle to the predetermined plane.

6. A dispenser according to claim 5, wherein the displacing means is engageable by a user from one or more outer surface part(s) of the dispenser.

5 7. A dispenser according to claim 6, the dispenser comprising, at the outer surface part and in the part(s) of the dispenser defining the surface part(s), a resilient or deformable element adapted to be deformed or displaced by the user so as to displace the edge portion of the holding means.

8. A dispenser according to any of claims 2-7, wherein the predetermined surface part(s) of the holding means is/are adapted to face the surface part(s).

10 9. A dispenser according to any of claims 2-8, wherein the edge portion of the holding means is an outer edge portion of the holding means.

10. A dispenser according to any of claims 2-9, wherein the engaging means is displaceable in a direction at least substantially along the predetermined plane, the dispenser comprising means for allowing a part of the holding means adjacent to the edge portion to bend away from the predetermined plane due to the biasing.

15 11. A dispenser according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the predetermined plane has a bent shape.

12. A method of operating a dispenser for holding a means for dispensing units,

- 20 - the holding means comprising a plurality of units to be dispensed from a predetermined surface thereof,
- 20 - the dispenser comprising:
- o an opening for receiving the holding means,
 - o means for preventing access to the units from the predetermined surface, when the holding means is received by the dispenser,
 - o means for engaging the holding means, when the holding means is received
 - 25 by the dispenser, and
 - o means for releasing the engaging means,

the method comprising the steps of:

- 30 - maintaining the first surface at or in a predetermined plane, when the holding means is received by the dispenser,
- abutting an edge portion, of the holding means, facing the opening, when the holding means is received in the opening, the abutting means having an abutting surface

- facing the edge portion of the holding means, extending at an angle to the predetermined plane, and a predetermined distance away from the plane, and
- a releasing step comprising displacing the edge portion of the holding means at least the predetermined distance away from the plane.

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13. A method according to claim 12, wherein the maintaining step comprises biasing the holding means against one or more surface parts of the dispenser, the surface part(s) defining the predetermined plane.

10 14. A method according to claim 13, wherein the abutting edge portion extends the predetermined distance away from the surface part(s).

15. A method according to claim 13 or 14, wherein the displacing step comprises displacing the edge portion at least the predetermined distance away from the surface part(s).

15 16. A method according to claim 13, 14, or 15, wherein the displacing means are positioned in a part of the dispenser also defining the surface part(s), the displacing step comprising displacing the edge portion in a direction at an angle to the predetermined plane.

17. A method according to claim 16, wherein the displacing step comprises a user providing the displacement from an outer surface part of the dispenser.

20 18. A method according to claim 17, wherein the displacement is provided by the user deforming or displacing the edge portion of the holding means by deforming or displacing a resilient or deformable element provided in the part of the dispenser defining the surface part(s).

19. A method according to any of claims 13-18, wherein the predetermined surface part of the holding means faces the surface part(s).

25 20. A method according to any of claims 13-19, wherein the edge portion of the holding means is an outer edge portion of the holding means.

21. A method according to any of claims 13-20, wherein the engaging means are displaced in a direction at least substantially along the predetermined plane so that a part of the holding means adjacent to the edge portion bends away from the predetermined plane due to the biasing.

22. A method according to any of claims 12-21, wherein the predetermined plane has a bent shape.

23. A dispenser for holding a means for dispensing units,

- the holding means comprising a plurality of units to be dispensed from a predetermined surface thereof,
- the dispenser comprising:
 - o a slot having an opening for receiving the holding means,
 - o means for preventing access to the units from the predetermined surface, when the holding means is received in the slot,
 - o means for engaging the holding means, when the holding means is received in the slot, and
 - o means for releasing the engaging means,

wherein the engaging means comprise releasable biasing means for exerting a friction force to a surface of the holding means in order to prevent or make difficult removal thereof from the dispenser.

24. A dispenser according to claim 23, wherein the releasable biasing means is adapted to exert a first friction during movement of the holding means into the dispenser and a second, higher, friction during removal of the holding means from the dispenser, when the releasing means is not operated.

25. A dispenser according to claim 24, wherein the releasing means is adapted to have the biasing means exert a third friction during removal of the holding means from the dispenser, when the releasing means is opera, the third friction being lower than the second friction.

26. A dispenser according to any of claims 23-25, wherein the releasable biasing means comprises at least one leaf spring having two ends, one end engaging the dispenser and the other end being positioned so as to engage the holding means when received in the dispenser, the spring being positioned so that the one end is positioned closer to the opening than the other end.

27. A dispenser according to claim 26, the at least one leaf spring having a longitudinal direction between the one end and the other end, the longitudinal direction being at least substantially parallel to a direction of movement of the holding means during reception in the slot.

28. A dispenser according to any of claims 26 or 27, wherein the releasing means is adapted to remove the engagement between the leaf spring and the holding means.

29. A dispenser according to claim 28, wherein the releasing means are adapted to move the other end of the leaf spring in a direction away from the holding means.

5 30. A dispenser according to claim 29, wherein the releasing means is adapted to be translated in a longitudinal direction of the spring, the releasing means having means for engaging the spring and maintaining at least part of the spring away from the holding means.

10 31. A dispenser according to any of claims 23-30, wherein the releasable biasing means comprises an element rotatable around a predetermined axis and having a part adapted to exert the friction force, when the element is rotated into a first position, the releasing means being adapted to rotate the element to a second position where a lower friction is exerted by the element.

15 32. A dispenser according to claim 31, wherein the releasable biasing means further comprises means for biasing the element toward the holding means, when the element is in the first position.

33. A dispenser according to claim 31 or 32, wherein the element comprises one or more edge parts adapted to engage the holding means, when the element is in the first position.

20 34. A dispenser according to any of claims 31-33, wherein the predetermined axis is at least substantially perpendicular to a direction of movement of the holding means during reception in the slot.

35. A dispenser according to claim 34, wherein the axis of rotation is positioned closer to the opening than the part adapted to exert the friction.

36. A method of operating a dispenser for holding a means for dispensing units,

- 25
- the holding means comprising a plurality of units to be dispensed from a predetermined surface thereof,
 - the dispenser comprising:
 - o a slot having an opening for receiving the holding means,
 - o means for preventing access to the units from the predetermined surface, when the holding means is received in the slot,

- o means for engaging the holding means, when the holding means is received in the slot, and
- o means for releasing the engaging means,

the method comprising the step of having a releasable biasing means of the engaging means exert a friction force to a surface of the holding means in order to prevent or make difficult removal thereof from the dispenser.

37. A method according to claim 36, wherein the releasable biasing means exerts a first friction during movement of the holding means into the dispenser and a second, higher, friction during removal of the holding means from the dispenser, when the releasing means is not operated.

38. A method according to claim 37, wherein the biasing means exerts a third friction during removal of the holding means from the dispenser when the releasing means is operated, the third friction being lower than the second friction.

39. A method according to any of claims 36-38, wherein the releasable biasing means comprises at least one leaf spring having two ends, one end engaging the dispenser and the other end engaging the holding means when received in the dispenser, the spring being positioned so that the one end is positioned closer to the opening than the other end.

40. A method according to claim 39, the at least one leaf spring having a longitudinal direction between the one end and the other end, the longitudinal direction being at least substantially parallel to a direction of movement of the holding means during reception in the slot.

41. A method according to any of claims 39 or 40, further comprising a releasing step wherein the releasing means removes the engagement between the leaf spring and the holding means.

42. A method according to claim 41, wherein the releasing means move the other end of the leaf spring in a direction away from the holding means.

43. A method according to claim 42, wherein the releasing means are translated in a longitudinal direction of the spring, the releasing means having means for engaging the spring and maintaining at least part of the spring away from the holding means.

44. A method according to any of claims 36-43, wherein the releasable biasing means are rotated around a predetermined axis and having a part exerting the friction force, when the

element is rotated into a first position, the releasing means rotating the element to a second position where a lower friction is exerted by the element.

5 45. A method according to claim 44, wherein the releasable biasing means further comprises means for biasing the element toward the holding means, when the element is in the first position.

46. A method according to claim 44 or 45, wherein the engaging step comprises having one or more edge parts of the releasable biasing means engage the holding means, when the element is in the first position.

10 47. A method according to any of claims 44-46, wherein the rotation is performed around a predetermined axis which is at least substantially perpendicular to a direction of movement of the holding means during reception in the slot.

48. A method according to claim 47, wherein the axis of rotation is positioned closer to the opening than the part adapted to exert the friction.

15 49. A dispenser according to any of claims 1-11 or 23-35, further comprising a biasing means adapted to be biased by the holding means when received in the slot and which is adapted to move the holding means in a direction out of the slot, when the releasing means are operated.

20 50. A dispenser according to any of claims 1-11 or 23-35, wherein the releasing means comprises one or more push buttons, pushing the one or more buttons toward or into the dispenser releasing the engaging or biasing means.

51. A dispenser according to any of 1-11 or 23-35, wherein the releasing means comprises one or more rotatable members, rotation of the rotatable member(s) releasing the engaging or biasing means.

25 52. A method according to any of claims 12-22 or 36-48, further comprising the step of biasing a biasing means during insertion of the holding means in the slot, an outputting step comprising the step of the biasing means pushing, upon operation of the releasing means, the holding means in a direction out of the slot.

53. A method according to any of claims 12-22 or 36-48, wherein the releasing step comprises pushing one or more push buttons toward or into the dispenser in order to release the engaging or biasing means.

5 54. A method according to any of claims 12-22 or 36-48, wherein the releasing step comprises rotating one or more rotatable members in order to release the engaging or biasing means.